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A SCIENTIFIC EXPLANATION AND UNDERSTANDING
OF EPISTEMOLOGICAL ISSUES IN TOURISM RESEARCH
(A STUDY BASED ON THE THEORIES OF KURT LEWIN AND JOHN TRIBE)

Abstract: The article presents the essence as well as various models of academic explanation and the explanatory value of understanding, indicating their usability and limitations as regards understanding why and how tourism functions. Particular attention has been paid to the epistemological dimension of tourism research, as well as its new directions. The author has referred to two models concerning the epistemological aspects of tourism research where the focal point is the category of 'truth about tourism'. These have been presented in two articles by John Tribe.

Keywords: tourism, tourism research, theory, typology, explanation, understanding, prediction, epistemology.

1. INTRODUCTION

One of the foundations of knowledge is the assumption that there is a recognizable regularity and a specific order in the real world which makes it possible to sort out and 'structure' different areas of social and economic reality (Frankfurt-Nachmias, Nachmias, 2001). Following this assumption, regardless of the intensity of changes taking place on the contemporary tourism market, academic research tries to explain various facts, processes, phenomena, etc. In the case of such a multi-faceted and dynamic phenomenon as tourism however, it is not easy, especially as tourism research, regardless of the progress achieved in recent years (Alejziak, 2005; Butler, 2015; Butowski, 2014; Dann, Nash, Pearce, 1988; Jafari, 2001; Liburd, 2012; Oviedo-Garcia, 2016; Ritchie, Burns, Palmer, 2005), is still at an early stage of development (Alejziak, 2008a; Ballantyne, Packer, Axelsen, 2009; Benckendorff, Zehrer, 2013; Pearce, Butler, 1993; Tribe, 1997, 2006, 2010). As for an evaluation of tourism research, it is also very important to remember that it is currently an object of interest for representatives of many academic disciplines who use varying approaches and take different methodological perspectives in their work (Alejziak, 2008b; Hall, Williams, Lew, 2004; Theuns, 1986; Winiarski, 2003, 2004; Xiao, Smith, 2004). This is clearly visible in the wide range of academic explanation types,

as well as in the specific way in which other academic functions (understanding and predicting) are performed. For these reasons, the analysis and evaluation of tourism research is not simple, especially from an epistemological perspective.

By performing three basic functions: descriptive, explanatory and prognostic (Brzeziński, 2005), science aims to provide verifiable knowledge which helps to explain, predict and understand empirical phenomena as well as the features and/or performance of processes, ideas, etc. which are dealt with in a given discipline. In tourism research, we deal with an exceptionally broad range of research problems and issues, including the spheres of culture (society, economy) and nature (environment). It is vital for the discussion presented later in the article that all three functions, though characteristic of all disciplines, are performed differently in natural sciences than in the social sciences and humanities. This particularly concerns explanation, frequently considered to perform the superior function.[1]

Scientific explanation is widely discussed in various academic disciplines. An important issue (especially from the epistemological perspective) is whether explanation is more about explaining what is unknown by what is visually known, as postulated by Aristotle,

or is it about explaining what is visually known by what is unknown, i.e. about enhancing our knowledge about the world, as postulated by Karl Popper (*cf.* Bogucka, 1991). Simply put, it can be assumed that, in terms of science, explanation involves analysing and locating what we explain in the context of its current state, as well as trying to find a proper place for a given object, fact or regularity among issues and explanations already known and accepted by science. Explaining tourism phenomena encounters numerous difficulties due to the fact that research and academic knowledge about tourism is still at an early stage of development and the theories related to it have many faults. Let us take the example of theories and explanations regarding exclusion factors as inhibitors of tourist activity. They are usually explained on the grounds of attribution theory while their causes are not indicated (Alejziak, 2016) and even its researchers are often unaware of them. Generally speaking, there are not many well-grounded theories (let alone laws) in tourism which could be the basis of scientific explanation and understanding of its phenomena. As a result, explanation is largely based on typologization and simple modelling (Alejziak, 2013).

The essence of scientific explanation is often referred to as a process which aims to provide an answer to the question 'why?'.[2] Without going into much detail concerning the relativity of this question (the discussion of the issue is developed in a number of other academic disciplines), this article focuses on an analysis of different types and the role of explanation in tourism research, as well as on the epistemological problems of the knowledge it provides. These issues seem to be extremely important for the further development of tourism research and knowledge, especially if they involve changes in knowledge acquisition and transfer.

2. EXPLANATION AS A FUNCTION OF SCIENCE: ITS ESSENCE AND TYPES OF EXPLANATION

Academic explanation may be viewed from two perspectives coming from different traditions of approaching these issues on the grounds of scientific philosophy, which was presented in a concise way in *Filozofia a nauka. Zarys encyklopedyczny* (1987):

> On the one hand, to explain a fact means as much as to indicate a general regularity, whose particular case is the following: 'An individual fact is said to be explained by pointing out its cause, that is, by stating the law or laws of causation, of which its production

is an instance' (John Stuart Mill). According to the other approach, to explain a phenomenon means indicating the law revealing its nature; to understand a phenomenon is as much as 'express its essence in the form of a concept' (Georg Hegel, after: *Filozofia a nauka…*, 1987, p. 741).

It should be remembered that the laws of science may reflect substantial, attributive, cause-and-effect, functional and structural relationships of what is studied. It is assumed then that this can also be characteristic of explanation.[3] In the explanation process, we apply different categories, the most important of which include essence, law, cause, function and structure (Nikitin, 1975, p. 33). Occasionally, these categories are treated as equivalent, but in reality, for instance, the gnoseological theory of explanation assumes that is has a complex structure, consisting of hierarchically ordered levels. At the highest level, there is the category of 'essence', which makes it possible to discover and provide the most general description of the nature of explanation; lower we find a law which reveals the basic mechanism of the explanation procedure; while the lowest level is constituted of categories such as cause, function, structure, etc. which provide a more specific and fuller description. It is only at the last level that the transition from explaining in general to identifying its individual type takes place.

The classic model of academic explanation was proposed by Hempel & Oppenheim (1948, 135-175; after Nagel, 1985) who first developed the original model of deductive-nomological explanation (Gr. *nomos* – law),[4] extended later with the hypothetico-deductive explanation model. In the deductive-nomological model (D-N), the phenomenon which is to be explained (as well as the sentence defining it) is referred to as an *explanandum* (Latin – 'what is to be explained'), while the element which is used to explain the phenomenon with is called the *explanans* (Latin – 'explanation'). Every *explanans* is composed of two methodologically different parts: sentences representing individual facts and sentences representing general regularities. The essence of this model of explanation is deductive reasoning, whose conclusion is an *explanandum* sentence E, while the set of premises is the *explanans*, consisting of general laws L_1, $L_2,…, L_r$ and sentences C_1, $C_2,…, C_k$, adducing certain individual facts, as illustrated in the model below:[5]

$$(D-N) \quad \frac{\begin{array}{c} L_1, L_2, …, L_r \\ C_1, C_2, …, C_r \end{array}}{E} \quad \begin{array}{c} Eksplanans \\ Eksplanandum \end{array}$$

The *explanandum* is usually a sentence (or a set of sentences) describing a given fact (system, phenomenon, process, etc.), though it may also be an empirical generalization, law or academic theory. The *explanans*,

on the other hand, consists of a set of explanatory sentences which state certain individual facts (boundary conditions). With the help of the deductive-nomological model, based on research and the knowledge it provides, we can explain individual facts (e.g. why X is a tourist more often than Y), as well as general regularities (e.g. why people living in cities are more active tourism-wise than those who live in the countryside).

According to Nikitin, logically speaking, two basic conditions can be indicated for the *explanandum* and four for the *explanans*. The *explanandum* should provide a precise and exact model (in the linguistic sense) of what is being explained, and it should be true. On the other hand, the *explanans* should mirror the same area as the *explanandum*, contain at least one scientific law, and formulate the conditions under which the *explanandum* is covered by such a law. Moreover, from the point of view of the information it contains, it cannot be identified with the *explanandum*, or contain it as a part (Nikitin, 1970, after Lubański, 1972).

It should be emphasized that not every kind of explanation is scientific. Hempel & Oppenheim stated the conditions that must be fulfilled to make an explanation scientific: the *explanandum* must be a logical consequence of the *explanans*, the sentences forming the *explanans* must be true, and the *explanans* itself must contain at least one general law and have empirical content.

The literature on scientific methodology provides many typologies of explanation as well as descriptions of the usefulness of different types in individual academic disciplines. Their diversity and basic uses are presented in Table 1.

Explanation may be classified in various ways based on different criteria. In Table 1, the author partly used the classification and description of different types of explanation presented by Waszczyk & Szczerbicki (2003), modifying at the same time the earlier conceptions developed by Nikitin.[6] Among the numerous types of explanation identified in various classifications, it is worth mentioning three more: intentional, co-existential and theoriological.

Intentional explanation is typical of social sciences (mainly psychology), revealing the immense complexity of cultural and social interactions among individuals. It refers to the intentions (intended aims) of active individuals, so it is essentially similar to teleological explanation containing certain elements of functional explanation as well. Intentional explanation basically involves indicating the future state towards which the activity being described is supposed to lead. However, the general model of this explanation should include not only someone's goals and desires. A person acting with a certain intention in mind chooses a specific mode of action because they are convinced that it is the right means to achieve the goal. This conviction is connected with other convictions concerning the present state as well as causal relationships between the means and the goal. Thus, with intentional explanation, we should consider the relationship between desires, convictions and action (Strawiński, 2011, p. 326).

Co-existential explanation involves referring to a law which indicates permanent relationships among the features of what is being explained, according to the following formula: 'for every *x*, if *x* is characterized by *W*, *x* is also characterized by *Z*'. According to Waszczyk (who refers to Bunge, Nikitin and Hajduk), in this context we can mention such types of explanation as structural, substantial-attributive and systemic, because "… to simplify, it can be assumed that the types of explanation mentioned above, as well as explanation by classifying (taxonomic) and referring to another level of phenomena, are based on co-existential laws, so each of them can be referred to as co-existential explanation" (*cf.* Waszczyk, 1996, p. 148).

In **theoriological explanation**, the *explanandum* is a specific theory, understood as a structurally organized system of laws. While in other types of explanation, the *explanans* features a specific law (or set of laws), and the related theory that has been applied is often implicit, in theoriological explanation, the *explanans* must contain a clearly defined theory which explains the *explanandum*,[7] and which is, in a way, 'covered' by another, more popular but slightly modified theory (changing the boundary conditions). Then, 'something less known' is explained by 'something better known'.

When analysing the functions, types and uses of academic explanation, we should remember that its different functions may interpenetrate and link to one another,[8] and in addition some of them may be formulated in such a way (by translating the formula of laws of one kind to another) that they assume a different form: causal or co-existential, or teleological, or probabilistic. It must be remembered, however, that such 'reformulating' may be misleading. For example, functional laws, despite the fact that they can be approached causally, in fact are not causal at all, because they usually do not meet the condition of asymmetry as the majority of functional relations are symmetrical and do not change when cause and effect 'swap over' (Bunge, 1968).

It is also worth adding that not every scientific explanation is based on a universal (general) truth and this is particularly significant in the case of discussion anchored in epistemology. The dilemmas related to discovering universal truth are particularly noticeable in social sciences in which there are relatively few universal generalizations. That is why social sciences widely use probabilistic explanation[9] which refers to generalizations expressing either the arithmetical relation/ratio of one phenomenon to another (n % *X* = *Y*), or certain tendencies (*X* tends to generate *Y*). The most important

Table 1. Basic types of academic explanation

Identification based on the character of the laws used in the *explanans*	
Teleological (purpose-focused) explanation	It refers to the rule which assumes that the final state of a given *explanandum* phenomenon (e.g. an event) has a significant impact on the state which is being explained. Thus, it consists in searching for the purpose of a given event. The basic question which can be helpful in teleological interpretation is 'what for?' (e.g., What did the event occur for?). In teleological explanation, we are searching for a purpose which 'something' (a fact, structure, event, circumstances) serves or will serve in the future.
Functional explanation	It indicates the function performed in a given system (e.g. economy) by the *explanandum* phenomenon (e.g. tourism market). Thus, it is about referring to the law which states a given relationship between an element and the system. Due to the fact that functional laws can be classified as a certain type of co-existential laws, functional explanation is often interpreted as substantial-attributive or systemic explanation. Some believe that it is a kind of teleological explanation (assuming that it is actually a description rather than an explanation).
Genetic explanation	It establishes the transformations which the *explanandum* phenomenon undergoes over a period of time. Its significant feature is the identification of circumstances in which the transformations take place by examining the factors causing the changes. To explain the origins of something is to answer the question how (but also where from) it originated, remembering that circumstances and causes often do not have an immediate and direct effect, and they have consequences occurring later in time. Therefore, mainly those factors are taken into consideration which display some substantial or structural bond with the phenomenon that is being explained. Some scholars claim that genetic (historical) explanation is a type of causal explanation.
Causal explanation	It refers to laws which may be generally covered by the following rule: 'the same causes, in the same conditions, produce the same results'. In this explanation, we often identify a number of intermediate stages which the system had gone through before it reached the state presently explained. A kind of causal explanation is consequential explanation, also referred to as 'inverted' causal explanation. While causal explanation reveals the essence as 'something' passive (generated by 'something'), consequential explanation presents the essence as an active (causal) beginning. In causal explanation, the essence of what is being explained occurs as an effect, and in consequential explanation – it functions as an active cause. Consequential explanation is not homogenous, and its effectiveness depends on how permanent the effects generated are.
Probabilistic explanation	Here, the *explanandum* is explained by referring to the statistical law, which extrapolates the distribution of variables in a statistical sample to the whole population. Despite criticism, it is currently the most popular type of explanation in social sciences (especially in economics). If we assume strict determinism, statistical laws are formulated only because it is impossible to know all the factors of a given event taking place. As regards criticism of this type of explanation, it is worth recalling Bunge's maxim, which says that "rejecting statistical explanation would be as silly as considering it to be finite" (Bunge, 1968, p. 366).
Identification based on the type of the *explanans – explanandum relationship*:	
Explanation through a law (theory, hypothesis)	The *explanans* enters into a direct relationship with the *explanandum*. Analogy is not used here, but it is stated directly that 'it happens so because…' (or: 'usually, in certain conditions – i.e. statistically, it happens so and so'). The term used to refer to this explanation refers to the fact that a given object is explained through a law approximating an objective law of a given objective domain (own laws). The law (hypothesis) used for explanation must have an adequate 'explanatory quality' (Nikitin, 1975, pp. 49-51).
Model explanation	It is increasingly used in contemporary science because real objects are sometimes inaccessible (usually due to their complexity and difficulties in direct recognition). Then, the model plays the role of an intermediary mirroring the reality, and the laws of the model are used in the *explanans* as explanatory laws. In order for such a procedure to be valid, the model must meet certain conditions. The two most important ones are 'isomorphism' and 'homomorphism'. The former assumes that the model must always be similar to the original, and the latter – that it must be different from it; otherwise modelling would be senseless (Bunge, 1968). This type of explanation is sometimes criticised because it often features an analogy, while the classic model is based on deduction.

Source: author, based on: Nikitin (1975), Waszczyk, Szczerbicki (2003), Apanowicz (2000).

limitation to probabilistic (inductive) generalizations is that, compared to general laws, the conclusions concerning specific cases cannot be drawn with complete certainty.[10] According to some researchers, probabilistic explanation is in fact only one of the extensions of the classical model of explanation which stems from the fact that in the empirical sciences, in addition to explicit laws, there are also statistical laws which state that the occurrence of events of a particular type is probable provided events of another type take place.

Despite the multitude and diversity presented above, there are, in fact, three most common types of explanation: teleological (purposeful), genetic and functional (Table 2).

Despite the fact that tourism studies are conducted by representatives of various disciplines, where the mean-

Table 2. Three main types of scientific explanation: their basic concepts and questions, as well as uses
in various domains of social sciences and the humanities

Basic types of scientific explanation			
Type of explanation	Basic concepts	Basic question	Use
Intentional	sign – meaning	'What did he mean to achieve/ say?'	– psychology – hermeneutics, text interpretations – nce predominant type of causality (reading signs, messages, intentions)
Functional	structure – function	'What role does it play?', 'What does it give?'	– biology and natural sciences, theory of evolution, theory of systems – functionalism in sociology – evolutionary orientations in psychology
Genetic	situation – origins	'How did it come about?', 'How did it happen?'	– history, – psychology (narrative theories of the mind)

Source: based on: Nikitin (1975), Grobler (2006), Alejziak (2016).

ing of individual functions ascribed is not always the same, and where different kinds of methodological apparatus are used, it is explanation that is usually considered to be of key importance.[11] It is believed that it has a crucial influence on developing theories regarding tourist behaviours and the effects of tourism (economic, social, cultural, environmental, etc.). A similar opinion, with reference to all of science, was voiced by Karl Popper:

> I believe that the goal of science is to search for good explanations to everything that, in our opinion, needs to be explained […] it must be explanation provided by means of verifiable and falsified universal truths and initial conditions. […] The supposition that the goal of science is to search for good explanations leads us to the idea of a gradual improvement of explanations by raising the level of their verifiability, i.e. by moving over to theories which are more verifiable, to theories of larger content, higher degree of universality and higher degree of precision (Popper, 1992, p. 252, after Strawiński, 2011, p. 323).

In this context, we should emphasize the considerable significance that the choice of the proper type of explanation, which should be adjusted to the character of the phenomena under study, has for research results and the theories based on them. Regrettably, in tourism studies, the situation is not good in this respect, as a result of which explanations are often quite general and do not go too deep into the 'essence of the matter'. In this situation, if we are satisfied with the simplest explanations, some important issues remain undiscovered (unexplained), left in the 'hidden dimensions of explanation'.

As an example, let us take a model of analysis concerning an explanation of the causes of a lack of tourist activity which the author presented at the 4th Forum of European Tourism: "Future in tourism – tourism in the future", held in Wrocław and Polanica Zdrój, in 2017.[12]

Let us hypothetically assume a situation in which we are informed that *John did not fly for a pilgrimage to Rome*. Trying to explain it, we first think about the lack of activity (participation in this trip), and especially its reason/reasons. Therefore, we will probably ask: *Why didn't John fly for a pilgrimage to Rome?* (Question 1) because that is what is done in the basic model of research on tourist activity. Through this question (putting the stress on **why**), we may find the answer concerning the reason (or reasons) and explain the lack of participation in the pilgrimage. But let us think what will happen if we accentuate something else in an identically formulated question:

- Question 2 – *Why didn't John fly for a pilgrimage to Rome?* while other students in his class or other company employees did;
- Question 3 – *Why didn't John fly for a pilgrimage to Rome?* and 'lost' two or even more days, going by car or train;
- Question 4 – *Why didn't John fly for a pilgrimage to Rome?* but, for instance, for a football match AS Roma – FC Barcelona;
- Question 5 – *Why didn't John fly for a pilgrimage to Rome?* but travelled, e.g., to Fatima or Częstochowa.

Let us notice how accentuating different words in the same question (*Why didn't John fly for a pilgrimage to Rome?*) changes the area of analysis and the explanative aspects of reasoning, broadening the spectrum of the analysed aspects of the phenomenon and increasing the possibilities of a full explanation of the same fact (*John didn't fly for a pilgrimage to Rome*).

In each of the five identical sentences (questions) where different words are accentuated, we deal with a completely different area of tourism knowledge, as well as with different issues that need to be examined and explained. Question 1 is about tourist needs, motivations and preferences. Question 2 is about the conditions and factors determining the level and structure of tourist activity, and especially issues of social differences in this respect. Question 3 examines a huge area of

knowledge regarding the role of transport in tourism, the significance of individual means of transport, etc. Question 4 additionally reveals (apart from the issue of motivation) the diversity of the offer which can be used by contemporary tourists as well as forms of participating in tourism. Finally, Question 5 opens another huge area of tourism knowledge – space and geography – the diverse locations of tourist attractions, directions of tourists, etc. Each of these questions (or actually one question with different words accentuated) presents a quite different area of tourism knowledge – starting from psychology, through sociology, economics, marketing, transport, geography, etc – which, taking the traditional approach (without different accentuation) we are not aware of and we would not take it into consideration during an explanation. Moreover, it is noteworthy that in most questions (2-6), we actually do not have to deal with the lack of tourist activity (lack of trip) but just with different forms of participating in tourism.

The example above shows something more than the problems and some hidden dimensions of scientific explanation, or the fact that it may be of a pragmatic nature, depending not only on the context but also on the person who does the explaining and the person who expects the explanation.[13] This example, which illustrates yet another type, i.e. erotetic explanation (Kuipers, Wiśniewski, 1994),[14] shows above all that in tourism studies we should not reject new approaches and we should try and discover various (sometimes hidden) dimensions of explanation. Only by constantly looking for new inspirations as regards explaining the laws and mechanisms governing tourism, will we be able to formulate new questions and research hypotheses going beyond set patterns. Then, perhaps, the phenomenon we are all studying will reveal its other, interesting and so far hidden face, and we will have a right to say that we have substantially benefited knowledge. Therefore, in the next part of the article, the author will try to present the links and relationships between explanation and understanding as well as prediction. He will also describe their importance for the epistemological dimension and further development of tourism research and, consequently, also for the development of this important and dynamically growing domain of social and economic life.

3. UNDERSTANDING AND PREDICTION AS FUNCTIONS OF SCIENCE

Scientific explanations become reliable and valuable only when they have been tested. Testing is largely connected with another function: prediction (previdism).

To put it simply, it is a procedure for deriving knowledge about the future from knowledge about the past and the present. We may talk about prediction with reference to prognostics (talking about future events), as well as postgnostics or retrognostics, when we refer to facts which, in our opinion, took place in the past but were not recognized (Heller, 1992). Predicting and explaining (as well as understanding) are mutually complementary functions, although from the epistemological point of view, they are 'irreplaceable'.

3.1. PREDICTION

Logic-wise, prediction is, on the one hand the same, and on another, contrary to explanation.[15] In both cases, we are to deduct something from a set of accepted laws and sentences about facts. The difference lies in the starting points: in explanation, it is an accepted statement describing the fact for which we are seeking arguments that would explain it. In prediction, we start from a set of accepted laws and statements about facts, describing verified cases of these laws. Going from here, we deduce the statement describing the predicted fact, and its actual occurrence confirms the prediction. In prediction, we make a prognosis based on the *explanans* constructed in the process of explaining. It does not mean, however, that the epistemological role of these two research procedures is the same.[16] The expectation that scientific knowledge should lead to accurate prediction is based on the thesis that if X causes Y and X has taken place, then it can be predicted that Y will also take place. This expectation is based on the assumption that both general laws and probabilistic generalizations are recognizable and true. However, it is not always so, especially as regards social sciences, which we often criticize because though they are able to explain some facts and phenomena, they are often unable to predict them. What is helpful in this situation is understanding.

3.2. UNDERSTANDING

According to Ablewicz (2003, p. 92), it was only in the 20th century that people noticed that understanding is a universal human cognitive procedure "… fulfilling and constituting the basic structure of the person's relation with themselves and with all that it is not them". Compared to the remaining cognitive procedures and functions of science (explanation and prediction), understanding is much more difficult to define and operationalize (Czarnowska, 1991). The difficulty lies in the fact that the term 'understanding' is used in two meanings: predictive, and one based on empathy which is often defined as the '*Verstehen*' type.[17]

Predictive understanding is represented particularly by representatives of, so called, logical empiricism, who assume that in social and natural sciences, it is possible to acquire objective knowledge, referring to the same methodological rules. Nowadays, however, this approach has few followers. Another approach prevails which is based on a reverse assumption and defines understanding in terms of searching and recognizing meanings hidden under observable things (facts, phenomena, etc.). In this approach, it is assumed that human activities are not axiologically neutral which makes research results dependent on value. Thus, in this approach, understanding aims above all as capturing (by 'sensing') what is unique and exceptional in human activities.

The problem of understanding particularly concerns social sciences and humanities, where the object of study is the human being, and the researchers are a part of the subject of their academic discipline. It had already been noticed by Max Weber (representing, so called, 'understanding sociology') who presented a person as an individual who interprets his/ her activities and the activities of other people by indicating that they may have different meanings. He decided that since people interpret one another's activities then this fact must not be ignored in constructing social theories. However, a truly substantial contribution to the development of the theory of understanding was made by Wilhelm Dilthey who was among the first to reject the positivist thesis about the methodological unity of science. While searching for an objective status of humanistic cognition, he abandoned the psychological theory of understanding which connected it with 'sensing' the intentions of another person, while it is in fact this person who is the object to be understood. Knowing the drawbacks in the social studies methodology used earlier, Dilthey pointed at the same time to the potential usefulness of the hermeneutic approach, according to which understanding should be considered in the context of human existence and human cognition. The main part of the discussion about understanding is based on hermeneutics which has made understanding the basic object of study (Szulakiewicz, 2004).[18]

When deliberating over the essence and mechanism of understanding, many authors use the metaphor of a circle or spiral (Ablewicz, 1998; Gadamer, 1993). They assume that understanding something, we move forward, but not linearly by adding consecutive pieces of information e.g. successive in time. Instead, we deal with circular motion, moving from a certain point to the object of cognition, following a circular path. When cognition reaches the furthest point, which is our goal, it returns, but not along the same route because it has already been changed. It must go to the beginning, i.e. to the place where it originated, but due to the 'journey' this place is not the same any more, either. It lies a little 'above' the starting point and surpasses the previous one in richness of knowledge. Thus, we deal with a form of a spiral.

Such constant movement 'from-to' is first of all the movement 'from what is subjective to what is objective'. An individual always learns the objective, using their own subjectivity as a point of departure. Having encountered it (it does not matter whether it is natural or cultural), the person returns 'to him/herself' and based on such subjectivity builds an understanding of the world and themselves. Formally speaking, this is moving 'from the particular to the general' and they are strongly interrelated. A change in the smallest part causes a qualitative change in the whole. Every new experience (a book that has been read, a conversation with another person, contact with nature, etc.) changes a human being as a whole, altering (depending on the type of the experience to a greater or lesser degree) their perception of the world, attitude to reality, people, etc. Sense may be read correctly only in the context of an individual's life, perceived as a whole.

The term 'understanding' is often considered in a broader sense than that presented above when it goes beyond the simple interpretation of its function as regards cognition. According to Ludwig Landgrebe, understanding does not just accompany cognition, but in fact is its foundation. He believes that before scholars start research, they already possess certain resources of understanding because "… everything that we are given, we first and foremost understand in the sense it has for us. Every understanding is 'entangled' in some meaning. The meaning of 'for us' is very important here because it is only through abstraction that we arrive at a pure 'object', which is the object of study" (Landgrebe, 1993, p. 200). In order to see it in such an objective form, we must consciously isolate it from the whole that we experience. The problem, however, is that this process of isolating is already based on some understanding which has built a specific research perspective. Martin Heidegger and Hans Georg Gadamer called it *pre-understanding*, and considered it to be one of the central concepts and, at the same time, a major goal in hermeneutics (Czarnowska, 1991).

Thus, in hermeneutics, understanding is treated not only as a cognitive process, but much more broadly. It stems from the assumption that a person (researcher) experiences two basic (epistemologically speaking) facts: that s/he is and that s/he learns. According to Ablewicz, "in the ontological sense, a human being is 'predestined to an existence of understanding'. In this meaning, understanding in a way precedes knowledge. Consequently, even the assumptions of empirical studies based on theories derived from such studies which most aspire to objectivity, are based on non-empirical premises" (Ablewicz, 2003, p. 94). Following this, three levels of

understanding can be identified which are added over-laying one another: existence, cognition and research level (Ablewicz, 2003). Looking from this perspective, the circular (spiral) structure described earlier, characteristic of understanding, is preserved (Ablewicz, 1998).

Hermeneutics looks for understandings and meanings, but this search in fact never ends. Researchers face new contexts all the time. Understanding is permanently open, the spiral of understanding never ends and the borders between objectivity and subjectivity are blurred. In order not to get lost in the multitude of interpretations (especially if they are equally possible), it is necessary to search for what enables people to understand. Such opportunities are created by **phenomenology**, according to which every object, phenomenon or idea, presented in specific meanings, conceals its specific (original) sense in which it may be recognized as particular and not differentiated. In this context, it is important to define the essence of the relationship between phenomenology and hermeneutics, remembering that "… the aim of phenomenology is to explain, and in this way verify all cognition. In order to achieve this aim, phenomenology excludes everything that can be doubted in any way, all that can be removed" (Ingarden, 1988, pp. 15-16). The co-existence and methodological relationship between hermeneutics and phenomenology considerably benefited the development of the social sciences, including tourism research (cf. Kowalczyk, 2014). In recent years, the concept of understanding has become the key term defining humanism, and hermeneutics has become a kind of humanistic epistemology (Szulakiewicz, 2004).

4. THE EPISTEMOLOGICAL DIMENSION AND RESEARCH PROCESS ISSUES IN TOURISM: DISCUSSION BASED ON KURT LEWIN'S AND JOHN TRIBE'S THEORIES AND MODELS

Similar to any intentional and consciously performed human activity, tourism research is directed towards a desired effect, which in this case is cognition and academic knowledge. The discipline which deals with these issues in a particular way is the theory of cognition, also known as epistemology (Morton, 2002).

> Epistemology is interested in the relations between our beliefs and the world; the conditions that must be met for our beliefs to contain knowledge and not superstitions or illusions; values which we ascribe to the carriers of our knowledge, i.e. statements, such as truthfulness, justifiability, probability, explanative power, the ability to predict, as well as the reasons which allow us to ascribe these values to them; functions performed by knowledge in action. There are two benefits

of epistemology: cognitive – human knowledge is one of the most important and puzzling aspects of cognition; responsible and modern epistemology plays quite an important role; and practical – familiarity with general qualities of knowledge, ways of achieving it, the rules of distinguishing between reliable knowledge and elusive knowledge facilitates action, particularly when a lot depends on the ability to learn about the world in a critical way, i.e. action such as, e.g. practicing science, doing business or managing people (Morton, 2002, text on the book cover).

The epistemological dimension of the research process spans two classical philosophical stances: empiricism and rationalism. It seems that it is necessary to explain basic epistemological issues and the differences between the most important paradigms of contemporary science to continues discussion about the methodology of tourism studies. Each of the two philosophical-methodological stances quite differently treats not only research methodology but even such fundamental concepts as truth.

John Tribe must have been guided by this idea. He discussed these issues with reference to tourism knowledge in his works published in recent years, written by himself or in cooperation with other authors. The beginning of this particular series of articles seems to be his *The indiscipline of tourism* (Tribe, 1997) where, apart from the basic thesis concerning the lack of the 'disciplinariness' in tourism or the possibility of identifying it as an independent academic discipline, he drew an outline of a theoretical model which he referred to in his later works. The same applies to the two works which are the axis of the discussion contained in this article where it was decided to present Tribe's views on the epistemological dimension of tourism studies. He put special emphasis on their evolution which reflects the changes in contemporary science both as regards research methodology and transfer of knowledge.

The starting point for the analysis was the article entitled *The truth about tourism* (Tribe, 2006), which is not only a splendid study of the epistemological aspects of tourism studies, but also turned out to be very inspiring for further discussion regarding the system of tourism knowledge.[19] In this work, the well-known Force-Field Theory developed by Kurt Lewin,[20] quite frequently used in a range of disciplines (*cf*. Stivers, Wheelan, 1986), has been used and put it together with positions presented in earlier works about research methodology and tourism knowledge. The concept of a knowledge force-field is used to describe the factors (forces) participating in the process of translating the empirical world into the world of theory/knowledge (Lewin, 1935, after: Tribe, 2006). Although Lewin's theory does not have direct connotations or links with tourism,[21] it proved useful in analyses concerning the processes of establishing knowledge about it. Tribe decided to use it to satisfy the needs

of those who complained about the shortage of publications regarding the ontology and epistemology of tourism studies. It was not the first time this researcher and tourism theoretician[22] had shown his exceptional talent for creatively using interesting concepts based on other disciplines for the purpose of tourism studies. This time, he posed a fundamental question: is it possible to "discover and present the truth about tourism?" (Tribe, 2006, p. 360).

Transferring the basic assumptions of Lewin's theory[23] to the domain of tourism studies, Tribe describes the complicated process of expanding theoretical achievements in this area. It is illustrated on the diagram (Fig. 1) where he presents the main conditions for and mechanisms of tourism research, as well as the relationships between them. The key role in the whole conception is played by the correct identification of the 'hindering and helping' forces that have an influence on the facts, processes and phenomena studied, as well as the relations among them. In the knowledge force-field that he identified, he included five basic forces coded as person, rules, position, ends and ideology. They are surrounded, in an orderly way, by the tourism theories then developed, as well as the conditions and circumstances in which they were created.

The theoretical model of tourism research and knowledge acquisition presented in Fig. 1 shows that we are never able to gain full knowledge about it because the whole research process involves a mechanism which Tribe calls 'double selectivity'. The first time such a selection takes place is when we 'cast a glance' over the world of tourism (K → J, in Fig. 1). The choice of the elements of 'tourist reality' which this glance 'lights up' largely depends on predetermined factors which fill the 'tourism knowledge force-fields' (Circle 2) because not all problems have the same chance of attracting the researcher's attention. The second selection is made during the study because the research process and its results (J →, i.e. Circles 2 and 3) are also subject to certain limitations; the

research process is dependent on the factors creating the knowledge force-field, i.e. factors participating in the process of translating the empirical world into the world of knowledge (theory).

The relationship between the real world of tourism (Circle 1) and the canon of knowledge connected with it (Circle 3) are described and explained with the help of the forces of knowledge (Circle 2) which play the key role in the whole process. The forces found in this field not only influence the researcher's perception of tourism, but they also affect one another. The diagram does not present them in separate frames, as is usually the case, which stresses the fact that there are no discernible borders between them. Each of the five forces is a kind of 'prism' which the information gained during research must be refracted through in order to reach the sphere of tourism knowledge. Tribe based his discussion on an analysis of the most important works on tourism, and also on scientific methodology in general, published over the last few decades, trying to indicate various 'hindering and helping' forces (Lewin's terminology) which have an impact on establishing knowledge about tourism. Below, we will find a description of the five groups of factors which determine the research process and the mechanisms of tourism knowledge development:[24]

– **Knowledge force-field – the 'Person' factor**: its particular significance among all five groups comes from the fact that it is the researcher who is the most important element in the whole process of establishing knowledge about tourism. The author believes that the factors related to a 'researcher's body and mind', which are often not realized and consequently disregarded, have a strong influence on the choice of the research direction and the specific issues to be studied, the methods that are used and the obtained results.[25] One research aspect which has been considered only recently is the researcher's gender. Studies conducted by Aitchison (1996) showed that the number of male writers publishing the results of their research on tourism and recreation is four times larger than the number of female, which, according to this author, confirms the thesis that developing knowledge in this discipline has a significant, though rarely considered dimension related to gender (Aitchison, 1996). In Tribe's opinion, in tourism research, the problems related to the individual (thus subjective) perception of phenomena which are components of the tourist reality as a whole, are of utmost importance. At the same time, the word 'I', due to the load of subjectivity it carries, is even forbidden in academic journals (e.g. *Annals of Tourism Research*).

– **Knowledge force-field – the 'Position' factor**: concerns the conditions related to the geographical location of research centres (and the researchers' place of living), both internationally (the differing influences
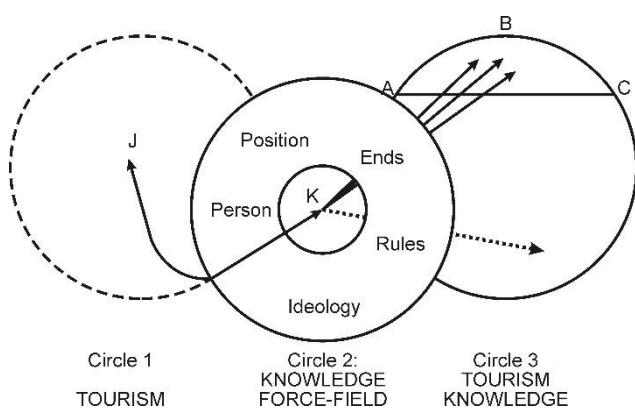

Figure 1. Knowledge force-fields in tourism research
Source: Tribe, 2006, p. 383

of individual countries on knowledge development) and sub-nationally (prevalence of certain research centres, universities, faculties, etc.). Ethnocentrism, location within university establishments and belonging to various academic communities seems to be an important force having an impact on the knowledge force-field. The analyses of publications about tourism conducted by Tribe indicated that the majority of theories ('truths' – with respect to the title of the work) which have built up present knowledge on tourism concern matters, are important to the tourist rather than the host, to consumers rather than those producing, and to the industry rather than the environment. Each of these dichotomies defines the interests of a dominant group, juxtaposing them with the interests of an inferior group (Hollinstead, 1999, after: Tribe, 2006).

– **Knowledge force-field – the 'Ends' factor**: we should bear in mind that the goals which accompany the process of establishing knowledge at a given moment have a strong influence on what, how and where researchers investigate. In this context, Tribe points to the commercialization of research and the treatment of knowledge as a commodity, as well as how significant the questions of financing tourism research are, the share of public funding to support this research, and how effectively these funds are used. Research of this kind is rarely sponsored by large companies or industrial sectors, as is the case in, for instance, the pharmaceutical industry. Financial resources for tourism studies are usually very limited, which makes them, or rather the subjects providing them, important selectors of research projects, deciding directions, procedure, methods and so on. All this, naturally, has an influence on research results and, ultimately, on knowledge about tourism.

– **Knowledge force-field – the 'Ideology' factor**: conditions of this kind play an important role, though researchers do not always take it into serious consideration. According to Tribe, the significance of this force may be viewed from two perspectives. On the one hand, tourism research is obviously determined by ideological factors, often involving religion, and on the other, tourism is a kind of ideology itself, forming a framework for analysing history, nature, tradition, etc. The former aspect of the ideologization of tourism research is more important. Its significance can be seen in the fact that as a result of research conducted, as well as the knowledge about tourism dominating the literature, views mainly related to capitalism and, so-called, Western culture are represented. By no means does it reflect the full range of ideological stances; the canons of tourism knowledge in practice lack theories based, for instance, on Islamic[26] or Hindi points of view.

– **Knowledge force-field – the 'Rules' factor**: concerns the broad sphere of academic organization, including the structures and rules according to which research is conducted. It embraces such elements as multi-disciplinary character, paradigms, traditions, methodology and so on. Particularly important are the limitations resulting from the fact that tourism is not an independent academic discipline, and this hinders research while influencing the number and quality of researchers who, consequently, experience some difficulties in developing their academic career. Tribe also writes about the 'tyranny of the discipline', which occurs in some new, interdisciplinary sciences. In tourism, economics is considered to be a 'disciplinary tyrant' and at the same time a kind of 'selector', partly deciding the research projects that are conducted (Franklin, Crang, 2001). Due to its predominance, "… this discipline appropriates most major socio-cultural problems of tourism, treating it as a set of actions of economic nature" (Tribe, 2006, p. 366).

The large and costly system of establishing knowledge on tourism (universities and other research institutions, conferences and symposia, academic journals, etc.) exists in order to discover and popularize the truth about tourism which should be the basis of all decisions connected its further development. The analyses conducted by Tribe show that developing knowledge is a complicated process and the force-field regarding the canon of tourism knowledge (Fig. 1, area ABC – the upper section of Circle 3) is considerably smaller than the field of unexplored, undiscovered or unexplained issues (area AZB). As a result, the circle regarding tourism knowledge (3) does not provide full and coherent knowledge about real tourism (Circle 1). Despite the efforts made by tourism researchers to make their research reliable and credible, they do not reveal the whole truth about tourism, and even sometimes lie. However, the reasons for such a situation and the answer to the question 'how to find the truth about tourism?' should not be sought only among the drawbacks of tourism research methodology (or at least not only there), but also in general research methodology. One of the reasons for this situation is that we often fail to see the differing limitations which affect research and, consequently, the theories formulated on its basis. According to Tribe, many tourism researchers perceive themselves as 'lions in the jungle', believing that in their research undertakings they are in practice restricted by nothing, while in reality they can be compared to 'lions in a circus' which remain locked in a cage of numerous structural limitations (Tribe, 2006). These opinions are shared by Butowski who believes that many questions regarding the ontological and epistemological dimension of tourism will probably have no clear answers for a long time (*cf.* Butowski, 2011, 2016).

The problems indicated in the first part of this article, regarding explanation and understanding as the basic functions of science, are best visible in studies and theories concerning various aspects of tourism. In the social sciences, which dominate as regards tourism research and establishing knowledge about it, we can observe a co-existence of individual trends often taking very different research perspectives. What they have in common is the constructionist model of cognition (Machnikowski, 2011) which assumes the lack of the chance to learn about the world in a way which is completely independent of cultural influences. As a result, it is not possible to find an objective truth about studied phenomena. Opponents of such an approach criticise exaggerated subjectivist interpretations that replace the objective truth in their narratives. The objective truth is replaceable regardless of the narratives having objective qualities or not.

The problems indicated above are particularly important with respect to those social sciences where the majority of research involves qualitative studies. In these disciplines there are many supporters of the, so-called, grounded theory, which is believed by many researchers to be the most 'objective' method of conducting qualitative research. This conception, developed in its basic form by Strauss & Glasser who described it in *The discovery of grounded theory* (1967), is also becoming increasingly used in tourism research (Metteucci, Gnoth, 2017) because:

> … it may offer a new level of understanding of the study of tourists and their interactions with the tourist environment. The grounded theory can generate explanations of events and relationships reflecting true experiences of individuals, groups and processes which are the focal point of tourist experience (Jennings, Junek, 2007, p. 2002).

The main role in this theory is played by the assumption that social reality is best understood by the actors involved who also include researchers. The theory rejects the traditional approach where the researcher analyses a community, using an earlier developed theoretical model, assuming that it causes 'self-verification' of the theory (the researcher finds what s/he wants to find). Research is conducted without pre-conceptualized theories, and with subsequent research procedures (interviews, observations, etc.), the amount of information and data is increasing, the theory in a way emerges from the study itself ('becomes grounded'). There are various types of the grounded theory, which differ in their approach to the question of the nature of being (ontology), the nature of knowledge (epistemology), ways of discovering and learning about the world (methodology), as well as the question of values (axiology). Each type has an impact on research practices and the interpretation of the results. Usually, three basic types of the grounded theory are distinguished: objectivist, post-positivist and constructivist (Metteucci, Gnoth, 2017). Their basic ontological, and epistemological assumptions as well as the most important methodological features are presented in Table 3.

Research conducted by Matteucci & Gnoth (2017) showed that tourism researchers have relatively little knowledge of the differences between the individual types of grounded theory presented in Table 3. These authors analysed 48 articles published in three academic journals considered to be the best ('Annals of Tourism Research' – ATR, 'Tourism Management' – TM and 'Journal of Sustainable Tourism' – JST). It turned out that in as many as 42% of the articles, their authors did not say which version of the theory and, consequently, which methodological 'regime', they had adopted in their

Table 3. Three basic versions of grounded theory (GT)

	GT objectivism	GT post-positivism	GT constructivism
Ontology	Realism	Realism	Realism
Epistemology	Positivist empiricism/ objectivism	Pragmatism	Relativism
Methodological description	– Researcher as a natural observer – Freedom of expression – Emerging from data which is self-evident – The goals include discovering and striving at abstract generalizations – Answers to *why*- questions – Rigorous coding procedure which powers the research – The number of investigated cases determines their objectivity – Literature reviews after data analysis	– Thoughtful researcher – Evaluation of statements – Using a pre-conceived framework for data analysis – Striving at developing a medium-range theory – Defining the differences in research results – Literature review before, during and after data analysis	– Thoughtful researcher – Evaluation of statements – Emerging from interaction – Striving at developing a medium-range theory – Generalizations may be dependent (agentic), strongly conditioned – Attempting answers to the questions *what?* and *how?* – Defining the differences in the research results – Flexible analytical procedures – Literature review before, during and after data analysis – Using the storytelling technique

Source: Charmaz (2011, after: Metteucci, Gnoth, 2017, p. 10).

research; in 10% of the papers, they chose the objectivist version, and the remaining two versions were referred to in 19% of the other publications (Matteucci, Gnoth, 2017). Similar conclusions follow from the study (this time based on an analysis of 31 articles) conducted by Stumpf, Sandstrom & Swanger (2016). They noticed however, that starting from the first publication on that topic which appeared in 1995 interest in this method and its application in tourism research had been constantly growing. In their opinion, this method enables researchers to make expected noticeable progress, as well as leading to better explanations and understanding of tourism. However, such expectations still remain unfulfilled, the epistemological, ontological and methodological dimensions of tourism research are still severely criticised, and many researchers believe that tourism studies lack a stable, solid theoretical basis, and are falling behind other disciplines (Benckendorff, Zehrer, 2013).

Pondering on the future of research and on the way to improve it, ten years after publishing the article *The truth about tourism*, presented in outline here, Tribe decided to return to the issue of the epistemological dimension of tourism research and knowledge. In 2016, he published an article where he introduced substantial modifications to the earlier model. The main advantage of this modification was to take into consideration many elements (conditions) which were absent in the original, as well as emphasizing the influence of digital transformation and changes in the academic communication system on the processes of building knowledge. Tribe presented his new ideas in an article written together with Liburd, entitled *The tourism knowledge system* (2016), where, with reference to earlier conceptions, a new model was presented called the tourism knowledge system.[27]

This will be presented later in a way which will allows us to easily observe the differences compared to the original model, show its advantages and disadvantages, as well as evaluate its usability for the evaluation of tourism research and setting new trends. In the authors' opinion (already quoted in the abstract), based on earlier studies in the field of tourism ontology and epistemology, this new model makes it possible to conduct analyses and present explanations regarding "… knowledge space, knowledge force-fields, knowledge networks, the four key domains of creating knowledge and their mutual relationships" (Tribe, Liburd, 2016, p. 44). According to the authors, it is to serve the purpose of explaining tourism more effectively, particularly the processes of investigating and gaining knowledge about it. The model (system) is presented in Figure 2.

The main components of the system are the elements of the old model, where the entrance and exit points are presented in the form of two circles: Circle 1 – the world (of tourism) and Circle 4 – knowledge (of tourism),[28] to which new elements have been added, in the form of

two circles: Circle 2, which includes four basic domains of science, and Circle 3, containing types of extra-disciplinary and 'extra-scientific' knowledge. The boundaries (inner oval β), environmental factors (outer oval α), as well as numerous feedback loops (dashed lines: a, b, c, d, e, f) and networks (j, k, m, n), which emphasize the dynamics of the system and the fact that all its elements remain in mutual relationship, are additional elements. Combined with letters (a, b, c, d, e, f), the arrows point in two directions to emphasize the feedback between all four basic elements of the system (large circles).

It is evident that Tribe's original model has undergone a profound re-configuration. It has been supplemented with many new elements which need to be discussed. First of all, we must pay attention to the changes concerning the knowledge force-fields. Although their number has not changed, the modification is highly significant. Assuming that the borders between the fields distinguished earlier were not clear enough, and some important types of forces were not taken into account, the previous five fields were combined into three forces: 'person', 'position' and 'ideology' (the conditions written into the two remaining fields – 'rules' and 'ends' – were also taken into consideration), and the new model included two new fields: 'government' and 'global capital'. These changes strengthen various impacts on the system of searching for knowledge by centres of power and capital (an example is, on the one hand, an EU program 'Horizon 2020', and on the other – the growing share of huge, usually international corporations in academic research).

A particularly significant modification of the conception lies in the fact that in the new model, the precious Circle 2, which filtered the knowledge provided by tourism research, has been replaced by two other circles (2 and 3), which refer to two separate sub-systems of knowledge acquisition. The first one (Circle 2) regards knowledge 'produced' in an academic environment as a part of four basic domains of science, and the other one (Circle 3) – the knowledge gained outside it (e.g. expert opinions, reports by different organizations, etc.). Other new elements are the small inner circles in both these fields (delimited with a dashed line), marked 'x' and 'y'. The first one (x) is to symbolize the flow of tourism research, which allows interpenetration the knowledge acquired in various domains and disciplines. Zone 'x' is a space where we observe the linkages of the knowledge gained from different disciplines.

The whole circle 2 has been divided into four areas: two of them regard those domains which are of key importance for tourism research: social sciences and business-related sciences, while the other two regard humanities and the arts (especially philosophy and history), as well as exact sciences, which – despite being less important – may significantly enhance the tourism knowledge and the understanding of related phenomena. The
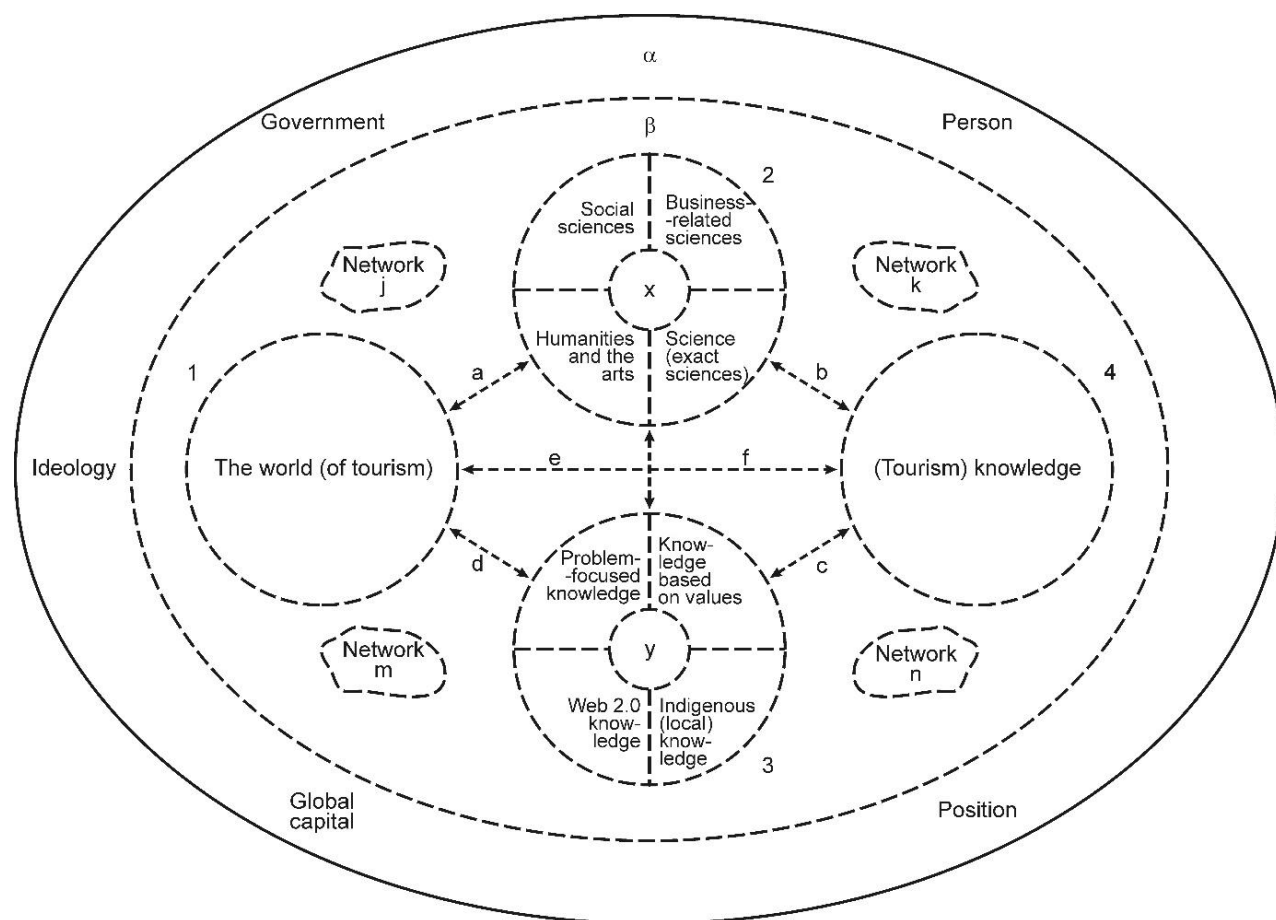
Figure 2. Tourism knowledge system by Tribe & Liburd: a modified conception
of the knowledge force-field theory in tourism research
Source: Source: author, based on Tribe, Liburd (2016), p. 46

authors of the conception stress the importance of the fact that in the face of certain limitations in social and business sciences as regards creative visions of the future, humanities and the arts offer an extremely valuable (under the circumstances) possibility to understand the past, present and future visions of tourism (Tribe & Liburd 2016, p. 48). In their opinion, representatives of exact sciences provide valuable knowledge about a number of issues related to and important for tourism (e.g. designing aeroplanes, construction, using computer systems and the internet and medicine). However, quoting some examples of works on this topic,[29] the authors emphasize the "insufficient engagement of exact sciences in the academic analysis of tourism so far" (Tribe, Liburd, 2016, p. 49).

The area delimited by Circle 3 regards extra-disciplinary knowledge, gained 'outside the academy'. It has been divided into four parts: problem-focused knowledge, value-based knowledge, indigenous knowledge and Web 2.0 knowledge. Problem-focused knowledge is particularly significant for practitioners (sometimes, it is referred to as 'practical knowledge') and usually takes the form of tacit knowledge. It may even be poorly rooted

in research, but its intention is good understanding and practical use. The authors call it 'extra-disciplinary knowledge', and examples include UNWTO, OECD, EU reports, research and development works by specialists, consultants, etc. Aware of the fact that knowledge focused on solving practical problems may sometimes generate problems itself, the authors stress the significance of value-based knowledge which, regardless of avoiding excessive 'practicality', also has certain advantages as regards protection against unnecessary domination and 'theoretizing' reality through the knowledge coming from Circle 2.

A separate area in circle 3 is Web 2.0. This issue is particularly appealing to Liburd who brings new, valuable elements into the system, understanding how significant nowadays is the fact that "…in contrast to passive browsing and downloading processed information, Web 2.0. refers to the rules and practices facilitating information exchange and social interaction by creating, changing and sending Internet content by users".[30] The knowledge popularized by means of Web 2.0 is above all popular academic knowledge (partly through social media, such as Twitter or Facebook) and although it is not so very important for purely academic communication, the

dynamic development of the academic blogosphere, as well as specialist dedicated portals such as Academia.edu or ResearchGate, change the situation in this respect (Alejziak, Liszewski, 2016). Web 2.0 undoubtedly has a huge influence on knowledge transfer systems (Cisek, 2008). Yet another phenomenon in academic communication, which is worth mentioning at this point, is Open Access (OA) which is of key importance as regards popularizing research results. (Maciejewska, Moskwa, Urbańczyk, 2007). We can hardly disagree with Tribe & Liburd, who claim that nowadays, "… striving at pluralistic epistemology, knowledge production is a question of continuous reflection on the part of producers, buyers and users. Web 2.0. is growing based on multi-, inter- and extra-disciplinary knowledge, supplied by users, who create it and work for it together" (Tribe, Liburd, 2016, p. 51).

The fourth area in Circle 3 regards indigenous knowledge, referring to specific cultures resulting from geographical location, traditions, or even local beliefs, which is ontologically and epistemologically connected with a specific community.[31] This kind of knowledge, however contextual and based on superstition, and often perceived by 'Western science' as old-fashioned or 'worse', proves useful in explaining many phenomena and processes taking place in different areas of tourist reception (especially 'exotic'). Including these issues fits into a new agenda, postulated by some researchers for local tourism epistemological decolonization (Chambers, Buzinde, 2015). It has been also been put forward to reduce the domination of English in tourism knowledge, as a result of which it would gain a better epistemological dimension encompassing perception and understanding from a local perspective (Dann, 2011; Tribe, Dann, Jamal, 2015).

An important part of Circle 3 is also the small circle 'y' in the centre, marked by a dashed line. It delimits the area of contradiction and interpenetration, emphasizing the diversity of forms and channels through which knowledge is not only acquired, but also transferred. The authors' zone 'y' is a good place to ask new questions and search for answers which may lead to new directions in research.

The last new component in the model are knowledge networks, presented in the diagram as clouds (j, k, m, n), which encircle individual elements of the system. By giving them the shape of clouds, the authors wanted to stress their metaphorical contrast with the remaining elements of the system, as "…clouds grow, come together, are fluid, are moving, float, dissolve, reappear" (Tribe, Liburd, 2016, p. 55). This element of the system clearly refers to an earlier work, entitled *Tribe, territories and networks in the tourism academy* (Tribe, 2010), where the author combined the paradigm of mobility with the Actor-Network Theory (ANT) for the purposes of tourism knowledge analysis. By placing this new element in their model, the authors meant fully and partly formal-

ized networks (TRINET, ATLAS, CAUTHE, IAST), as well as completely informal networks based on researchers' private contacts. An interesting example of such a network quoted in the article is Critical Tourism Studies, formed in connection with the preparations for and during a conference held in Dubrovnik in 2005, which remains a flexible forum of discussion about new directions in tourism research, open to new members.

Finally, it should be emphasized that in the new version of the model, the earlier double selectivity in producing tourism knowledge changes into five-fold selectivity, as a result of including additional elements and enriching the whole conception with aspects such as researcher's rhetoric, audience gaze and audience interpretation (Tribe, Liburd, 2016). This was a great benefit to the explanatory assets of the model because those additional elements revealed a number of conditions that went unnoticed before and that could have had a negative influence on the processes of 'producing' and 'consuming' tourism knowledge.

The comparison of the old and the new models in illustrating the tourism research system allows us to conclude that the new version is a complete and well thought-out conception, which considers practically all the conditions of this research and has a considerably larger potential as regards scientific explanation of various phenomena occurring in tourism and 'around' it. Its basic advantage is its universal character and the emphasis put on the flexibility of the present process of establishing tourism knowledge. This does not mean that this model is perfect, especially in terms of general conditions (generally concerning explanation and understanding in social sciences), discussed in the first part of the article. It seems, however, that it is the most comprehensive and fullest description of the tourism research system that has ever been presented in the literature. It is worth popularizing, especially among those younger tourism researchers who will be establishing the directions in tourism research in the near future.

5. CONCLUSIONS

As tourism is a phenomenon which is developing very dynamically and undergoing constant transformations, tourism research must be changing as well (Rojek, Urry, 1997). The problems signalled in this article, related to understanding and academic explanation, as well as tourism research methodology bring epistemological consequences. They mainly regard the character of the knowledge gained during the study and, consequently, also the 'truth about tourism', which loses the advantage of objectivity and at least partly becomes relativised.[32] In this situation, the role of epistemology and hermeneutics,

where we look for the most creative directions of research from the epistemological point of view (Botterill, 2001). The typical emphasis on subjectivity, which is opposed to the instrumental logic of positivism, is perceived as a particular chance for a better understanding of the tourism and the significance of the accompanying phenomena. It is based on the assumption that social structures and processes are too complex to be fully explained with the help of even the most properly used methods of observation. Therefore, a tourism researcher must skilfully combine intuition with interpretation, as the assumption that somebody can be totally objective and able to see the world 'as it really is' should be rejected in the light of present knowledge (Davis, 2001). Despite the fact that the hermeneutic approach has drawbacks as well,[33] it seems that together with other methodological conceptions deriving from new trends in the 'philosophy of practicing science' (including those which involve integrated approaches – interdisciplinary and systemic), it will have a decisive impact on the direction of further developments in tourism research. They may also lead to a breakthrough in this research. Taking into account the opinions on the post-disciplinary character of tourism (Cole, Hall, Duval, 2005), we should abandon traditional approaches and move towards more flexible forms of establishing academic knowledge. This concerns practically all elements constituting the general methodology of tourism research: new concepts, methods, techniques and research tools, as well as knowledge transfer systems which have also become substantially modified (Alejziak, Liszewski, 2016). The opinions, theories and concepts of John Tribe, presented in this article, match these expectations, and the two models, analysed in detail, may be a good reference point for a further search for new approaches and directions in tourism research.

ENDNOTES

[1] Such an opinion stems from a relatively popular concept of the symmetry of explanation and prediction, according to which every explanatory model may be used for prediction (if A is explained through B, then based on B, we can predict A). This particular issue has been presented in an interesting way in: *Aspects of Scientific Explanation* (Hempel, 1965) and *Wyjaśnianie a przewidywanie* (Woleński, 1979).

[2] This opinion refers to Aristotle's division of knowledge into demonstrative (answering the question "how?") and theoretical (answering the question "why?"). In fact, we also speak of explanation if we use the following questions: "for what purpose?", "who?", "how?", "what?", "where?", "where from?", as well as "was the event necessary?" (Nikitin, 1975, pp. 10-13).

[3] According to Nowak, the first of the perspectives is expressed through the concept of nomological-deductive explanation. In his opinion, "an extension of this model is probabilistic explanation which considers the fact that, apart from clear-cut laws, empirical sciences also include statistical laws, stating that the occurrence of events of a given type is probable, provided events of another type take place" (*Filozofia a nauka. Zarys encyklopedyczny*, 1987, p. 741).

[4] Sometimes, it is referred to as the covering-law model.

[5] The notation and description of the model has been taken from the Polish translation of Carl Gustav Hempel's fundamental work: *The Philosophy of Natural Science* (translated by Stanosz) (Hempel, 2001), found in Chapter 5 – *Laws and their role in scientific explanation*.

[6] They at the same time believed that different types of explanation can be classified on the basis of three basic criteria: the character of laws used in the *explanans*, the character of the *explanandum* and the relations between the *explanans* and the *explanandum* (Waszczyk, Szczerbicki, 2003).

[7] Theoriological explanation is often regarded as inter-theoretical explanation, i.e. one based on reduction. In fact, it is not so, as reduction – as intended by the creators of the science unification program (Vienna Circle) – was first of all supposed to ensure the unity of sciences by bringing basic methodological rules of the disciplines (theories), which are less developed theory-wise, to the concepts, objects and laws (theories) found in the best developed domains (especially in physics) (Waszczyk, 1996, p. 148).

[8] For instance, according to Waszczyk, Szczerbicki (2003), economics is dominated by statistical-factological model, as well as the co-existential-factological model explanation.

[9] According to some authors, probability has become a fundamental concept of science in the 21st century (cf. Nekrases, 1992).

[10] For instance, if it is known that in a given year, trips involving spending at least one night away from home were made by 60% of Poles with university education, we cannot conclude with full certainty that the probability of such a trip in the case of an individual Pole with higher education will be 6/10. It follows from the fact that the behaviour of certain people is influenced by other factors (apart from level of education). Such a person may, for example, love mountains and be a member of a mountaineering club, which increases the probability of tourism (it may also be a 'multiple' trip). On the other hand, if this is, for instance, a disabled person, the probability of this trip will significantly decrease.

[11] According to Chojnicki, in the modern philosophy of science, a predominant view is that of the essential role of explanation which establishes the cognitive sense and the framework of research procedure. This, however, does not mean the lack of the necessity to constantly look for new approaches and conceptions of explanation which would be appropriate for the character of individual disciplines. It is worth adding that this renowned representative of socio-economic geography saw the difficulty in using the deductive-nomological model (especially in the social sciences) and propagated a relativist approach to explanation, which, in his opinion, is "…not only a justifying procedure, but also a revealing one, in the course of which the premises of explanation are established. They constitute the knowledge about the processes and mechanisms determining the occurrence of facts, mainly with regard to real social systems" (Chojnicki, 2002).

[12] The author's presentation given at that conference can be found on: https://wtir.awf.krakow.pl/attachments/article/135/wyjasnianie_naukowe_i_rozumienie_w_badaniach_nad_turystyka.pdf (access: 15.09.2019).

[13] It is well illustrated by the example quoted by Grobler with reference to the question "Why did this road accident happen?", where the police will probably be satisfied with the answer: "Because the driver wasn't quite sober", a civil engineer will expect to hear that, e.g., "the road bend wasn't aligned correctly", and a car

designer will be interested in a possibly faulty construction of the car (Grobler, 2006, p. 113).

[14] Erotetics is the theory of questions and answers, which deals with the structure of interrogative sentences, question assumptions, types of answers and, so called, erotetic reasonings. A substantial contribution to the development of this type of explanation was made by van Fraasen in his book *The scientific image* (1980).

[15] This particular "reversal" of the logical structure of explaining and predicting is questioned by some authors. An interesting criticism was presented by Motycka (1984).

[16] The similarity of the logical model that we use in explanation and prediction does not mean that their role in building a scientific theory is similar. In social sciences, we deal with a specific feature of prediction, which has no analogy in natural sciences. They are, so called, self-fulfilling and self-refutable predictions (e.g. publicly announcing research results which predicted the occurrence of given social phenomena may have an influence on the attitudes and behaviours of people in such a way that as a consequence of this change these predictions will be confirmed or refuted (cf. Pawłowski, 1986).

[17] *Verstehen* – a German word (though used in other languages), signifying inner understanding by empathy, intuition or imagination. It stands in contrast to external knowledge, coming from observation. Despite certain relationships, or even similarities, empathy (*Einfühlung*) and understanding are two completely different stances. For instance, it is something quite different to understand a piece of art from a historical point of view (e.g. define its place of origin, significance and role played in history), and to feel its beauty as a piece of art.

[18] It must be remembered, however, that hermeneutics is not only a science, but in a sense also a practical art the understanding, providing clues and rules for interpretation.

[19] It is worth adding that this conception can also be used in analyses regarding research methodology and the mechanisms of forming knowledge in other disciplines. An example that can be quoted here is the work by Alejziak *Metodologia nauk prawnych a metodologia badań nad turystyką – w poszukiwaniu podobieństw oraz różnic w paradygmatach a podejściach badawczych* (2018), which is the source of some aspects presented in this article.

[20] Kurt Zadek Lewin – a distinguished psychologist and organization theoretician. He was born on 9 November 1890 and died on 12 February 1947 in the USA; for some time he lived in Wielkopolska. He was a professor at Humboldt University in Berlin, Iowa State University and Massachusetts Institute of Technology in Cambridge (founder and director of Research Centre for Group Dynamics at MIT). He was the creator of a specialty known as topological or field psychology, as well as the author of the Force-Field Theory, which inspired John Tribe.

[21] It is mainly used in management and coaching as a tool serving the purpose of assessing the influence of the surroundings on the changes which are to be introduced by a given entity or organization, in order to adjust to the changing conditions to their activity.

[22] For many years, John Tribe was the chief editor of the "Annals of Tourism Research", regarded as one of the best academic periodicals on tourism in the world.

[23] Lewin himself claimed that "he force-field theory cannot be called a theory in the common meaning, because it is hard to consider it either correct or incorrect, and it is best characterized as a method: i.e. a method of analysing causal relationships and building scientific constructs" (Lewin, 1943, p. 292).

[24] The description of these forces is quoted after the work mentioned earlier (Alejziak, 2018).

[25] John Tribe quotes specific examples of rarely considered factors determining academic research, such as ethnic and cultural, political,

biological, or even psychological aspects and those connected with personal experience. For instance falling for a certain woman had a strong influence on the choice of topic of PhD research by one of the top academics of today dealing with tourism (Tribe, 2006, p. 363).

[26] For example one of the canons of tourism knowledge, which assumes that gender does not substantially differentiate the level of tourist activity. In societies where Islam dominates this does not reflect reality because according to the principles of this religion, a woman should travel only in the company of her husband, father or brother, while men do not face such restrictions.

[27] In this work, the authors refer to the conceptions of the tourism system and tourism knowledge system, presented in publications by Leiper (1979), Jafari, Brent, Ritchie (1980).

[28] It is noteworthy that these circles represent the world of tourism and the world of tourism knowledge not as independent elements, but as a part of broad, separate categories – the world and knowledge in general.

[29] For instance, an article regarding the application of intelligent systems in tourism, which analyses this issue from the point of view of social sciences (Gretzel, 2011), several articles on travel medicine, or an article about the role of tourism in 'biological exchange' (as globally perceived), an effect of migration, and a part of international tourism (Hall, 2015).

[30] The example of using Web 2.0 in tourism research, quoted by the authors, is the "Ecocean" program, whose purpose is to non-invasively examine and protect whale sharks, in which photos and films made by tourists are sent by them to a special website, and then analysed by a special team of researchers affiliated and co-operating with NASA (they use techniques and algorithms used in star mapping with the help of the Hubble telescope (Tribe, Liburd, 2016).

[31] A very important aspect of this issue is the question of epistemological authenticity when explaining various tourist and tourism-related phenomena, as well as the moral responsibility of the researcher for the course and results of research (including the possible extent of indigenous knowledge). Interesting discussion on this topic is presented in *Autentyczność epistemologiczna jako nakaz moralny wyjaśniania rzeczywistości turystycznych* (Kaczmarek, 2018).

[32] Representatives of the epistemological-hermeneutic direction in tourism research suggest that even such a basic category as space may be interpreted differently, depending on its subject. Due to the fact that in tourism (perhaps particularly) it is possible to ascribe many meanings to different categories (e.g. space, tourist attractions, economic and social phenomena, etc.), it is often disputed which meaning should be the leading one.

[33] First of all, they are difficult to enact. The difficulty requires properly accentuating diverse issues and a research approach that would enable interdisciplinary co-operation to strengthen and not weaken the integration of tourism research, taking the individual character of every discipline into account (Maik, 2002).

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